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ABSTRACT

On June 5, 1989, the Council of Ministers for Employment and Social Affairs of the European Economic Community passed a detailed and comprehensive Resolution on continuing vocational training in Europe. Some of the possible consequences of the resolution are the following: (1) the prospects for the implementation of the Resolution are highly dependent on whether and to what extent the responsible bodies in each country are able to identify themselves with the will of the members of the Council; (2) two instruments can be used for the enforcement of the Council's intentions--funding and an action program; (3) investigation should continue concerning in which occupational fields and with what content and training objectives priority investment in continuing training should be made, how the burden of investment will be spread among public and private sectors, and how disadvantaged persons can benefit from training opportunities; and (4) projects in vocational training and regional development, continuing training for small and medium businesses, cost, and continuity of training for the unemployed are being carried out by the Council. (The text of the Resolution is included in this report.) (KC)

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The complementarity of these instruments is evident from the fact that the first involve more comprehensive programmes and relate to measures for a large number of individuals and institutions, with particular emphasis being placed on the assistance of disadvantaged or structurally weak regions, whilst the second is concerned with the promotion of innovatory projects, trans-frontier activities, training efforts involving groups of firms (e.g. for the staff of small and medium enterprises) and new employment initiatives for job-seekers, etc.

The action programme will probably be granted funds amounting to several million ECU per annum, and - like the COMETT, PETRA or ERASMUS programmes - will run for an initial period of three to four years.

It is likely that provision will be made for the financing of a research programme designed to increase knowledge on a European scale in specific sectors and in respect of specific questions of current interest linked with the continuing training and retraining of workers.

One of the central features of the action programme will be the support of future-oriented regional labour market policy through the continuing training effort, to promote the exchange of experience and information and cooperation amongst regions in different stages of development and in frontier regions, particular emphasis being placed on the strengthening of the innovative abilities of small firms, cooperatives and local (innovative) employment initiatives.

3. The wording of the Resolution corresponds in general to the conclusions drawn by CEDEFOP in the course of its work and presented on repeated occasions in studies, conferences, etc. (cf. CEDEFOP Flash No. 2/88).

   What is still lacking and what should be investigated in greater depth, both within the action programme and CEDEFOP's work programme, are the following issues:

a) In which occupational fields and with what specific contents and training objectives should priority investment in continuing training be made?

b) How can the burden of investment in continuing training be spread more justly between the public and private sectors and amongst firms showing very different levels of commitment - an intention expressed in the Resolution?

c) What can be done to ensure that the large number of individuals who are at a disadvantage already at initial

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training level and who are often neglected in the continuing training stage benefit from training opportunities which meet their qualification needs, i.e. what public and private measures and/or promotion criteria must be developed?

Last but not least, the question arises as to whether the on-going structural changes, changes in work organization, growing autonomy in the management of time, but also the double burden of work, - affecting not only women - call for a different type of continuing training from that which is principally occupation or labour market related and which excludes general and political education and training, without which it is becoming less and less possible to cope with specific everyday situations (cf. CEDEFOP Flash No. 6/88).

In the process of European integration, the command of a second language is becoming more and more important. The LINGUA programme proposed by the Commission and adopted by the Council in May 1989 therefore deserves wide-scale support.

The Ministers of Education in the EC should give consideration to the possibility of extending, under the responsibility of the public authorities, the provision of continuing training - not only continuing vocational training - to the whole of the adult population. For it is only when such public provision designed to meet the needs of all the public is available in each individual community - as the experience of Sweden and other countries has shown - will continuing training be able to play its important role in local/regional, economic and social development and make the contribution the Council and the EC Commission intend.

4. CEDEFOP is devoting increased attention to these questions within four major projects:

   - Vocational training and regional development
   - Continuing training for small and medium enterprises
   - The cost and financing of continuing vocational training, and
   - Continuing training for the long-term unemployed.

Initial (interim) results have already been obtained for these projects.

Annex: Council Resolution on continuing vocational training

5/89 - July 1989

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(Information)

COUNCIL

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

of 5 June 1989

on continuing vocational training

(89/C 148/01)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community,

Having regard to the conclusions of the European Council held in Hanover on 27 and 28 June 1988 and in Rhodes on 2 and 3 December 1988,

Having regard to the Council resolution of 22 December 1986 on an action programme on employment growth (1),

Having regard to the Council resolution of 3 November 1986 concerning the action programme for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (2),

Having regard to the conclusions of the Council of 15 June 1987 on the development of continuing vocational training for adult employees in undertakings (3),

Having regard to the views of the European Parliament on continuing vocational training,

Having regard to the proceedings of the Standing Committee on Employment, particularly those held on 25 November 1988,

Having regard to the joint opinion of workers and employers of 6 March 1987 on training and motivation and information and consultation,

Whereas vocational training should be able to meet the needs of workers and firms, of the economy in general and of the large single market in particular;

Whereas continuing vocational training plays an important role in the strategy for achieving, by 1992, both the internal market, including its social dimension, and economic and social cohesion, as a determining factor in economic and social policy;

Whereas investment in the Community's human resources is an essential pre-condition for the successful achievement of these objectives;

Whereas investment, employment, labour and vocational training policies are clearly linked;

Whereas continuing vocational training performs four functions inside or outside firms, depending on the case, which complement one another:

— that of ensuring permanent adaptation to the changing nature and content of occupations and hence the improvement of skills and qualifications which is so imperative for strengthening the competitiveness of European firms and their staff,

— that of promoting social conditions to enable large numbers of workers to overcome a lack of prospects for improving their qualifications and improve their situation,

— that of prevention, to forestall any negative consequences of completion of the internal market and to overcome the difficulties arising in sectors or undertakings undergoing economic or technological restructuring,

— that of integrating the unemployed, in particular the long-term unemployed;

Whereas, in the context of the social dialogue, workers and employers have agreed to pay special attention to questions of education and training; whereas the Council intends to take the results of such proceedings into consideration,

(1) OJ No C 340, 31. 12. 1986, p. 2.
(2) OJ No C 287, 14. 11. 1986, p. 1.
(3) OJ No C 178, 7. 7. 1987, p. 5.

Whereas it is important to take account of the views of all those concerned by vocational training, particularly of workers and employers, in endeavouring to achieve, at all levels, better forecasting of future trends with regard to qualifications and greater convergence between vocational training objectives and employment objectives;

Whereas this dialogue and these efforts by workers and employers and public authorities should be aimed primarily at improving access to vocational training;

Whereas all workers, whether or not they are in employment, should, in the light of requirements, have access to continuing vocational training, and benefit therefrom; whereas the conditions under which this objective may be achieved require appropriate examination,

HEREBY ADOPTS THIS RESOLUTION:

I. The Council invites the Member States, with due regard for the powers under national law of the parties concerned, to take or promote measures to:

1. encourage continuing vocational training to be made a more integral part of the short and medium-term development strategies of firms, branches and sectors in order to strengthen economic competitiveness;

2. integrate continuing vocational training into local, regional and national employment policies with a view to better forward management of employment;

3. strengthen training infrastructures, particularly in disadvantaged regions, so as better to achieve the objective of economic and social cohesion;

4. promote greater interaction between basic training and continuing vocational training and ensure that the latter leads to qualifications likely to be recognized by employers and the labour market;

5. develop specific forms of linked work and training, ensuring a fair balance between activities carried out within the undertaking and those conducted outside;

6. encourage public and private training organizations to diversify the training they offer and to adapt it to the particular requirements of small and medium-sized enterprises;

7. develop the preventive function of continuing vocational training by making it more accessible to categories of workers whose jobs are threatened as a result of economic or technological restructuring;

8. encourage steps to ensure that workers, whether or not in employment, can adapt to the consequences which technological change and sectoral restructuring have for employment and qualifications, so that they can take advantage of all the potential offered by technological and industrial innovation;

9. distribute fairly the organizational and financial burdens of continuing vocational training;

10. extend access of workers, whether or not in employment, to continuing vocational training by supporting the implementation of training measures and programmes inside and outside the firm, in particular measures aimed at workers in small and medium-sized enterprises;

11. integrate continuing vocational training measures into economic and social development schemes, particularly in regions whose development is lagging behind or regions in industrial decline, by promoting partnerships between the public and private sectors which include employers and workers' representatives, if they so desire, and all other interested parties;

12. strengthen the managerial, administrative and innovative skills of executive and supervisory staff in small firms;

13. encourage all workers, whether or not in employment, to make an effort to adapt and take vocational training in order to acquire better qualifications;

14. ensure, pending completion of the internal market, which will create positive new prospects for employment, that any adverse short-term effects resulting from the completion of the internal market are anticipated, inter alia, by continuing vocational training;

15. promote continuing vocational training for all workers, either employed or self-employed, whether or not in employment, and for employers and members of cooperatives;

16. encourage dialogue between workers and employers at all appropriate levels, in order to promote the implementation of the above measures on continuing vocational training.

II. The Council requests the Commission to lay before it as soon as possible an action programme on continuing vocational training aiming at:

1. identification and assessment, with the national authorities and in consultation with workers and employers, of existing measures to promote continuing vocational training;

2. support for schemes, including transnational schemes, to increase awareness and motivation in respect of continuing vocational training, particularly among executive and supervisory staff and workers in small and medium-sized enterprises;

3. reinforcing, with the help of existing mechanisms, the monitoring of qualifications at all levels, particularly in relation to new jobs, with a view to mutual recognition of qualifications;

4. continuing promotion, through the exchange of experience and support for innovative projects, of the development of transnational and transfrontier partnerships between public and private vocational training bodies and between undertakings, having regard to the specific needs of small and medium-sized enterprises;

5. support, as far as possible within the framework of the Structural Fund, the development of appropriate technical aid apparatus to help the regions of the Community which do not yet have sufficient infrastructure and experience in the field of continuing vocational training;

6. support for the transfer and spread, in particular transnationally, of innovations in continuing training equipment and methods, using where appropriate multimedia distance training systems;

7. examination of the conditions which, in accordance with requirements and for all those concerned, will enable the provision of information about continuing vocational training, access to such training and the benefit thereof, and in particular retraining leading to qualifications outside and/or during working time, to be made effective.

The proposal for an action programme should take account of the opportunities afforded by the Structural Funds, especially the European Social Fund, and by the Comett and Eurotecnet programmes.

III. The Council invites the Commission to submit to it, no later than three years after the adoption of this resolution, a report on the implementation of this resolution.